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ABSTRACT

Approximately thirty instructional development projects at a range of institutions of higher education were identified and analyzed in relation to political and administrative control factors. Preliminary data from this survey are not encouraging to the professional instructional developer. Innovative and aggressive teaching faculty from the subject area disciplines, or high level academic officers, seem to play a larger role in the development of new programs than formally trained developers. Data also indicate that, although faculty were sometimes given rewards of money or release time, personal commitment to projects appeared to be more important in ensuring success. This study graphically demonstrated that instructional development as a systematic approach to solving educational program problems is dependent upon the efficiency of the communication and management systems within a given institution. Without interrelation of communication, management, and instructional decision-making systems, projects may anticipate confusion, delays, frustration, and eventual failure. (Author/WBC)

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"POLITICS AND DIFFUSION STRATEGIES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION"

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PRESENTATION: "Politics and Diffusion Strategies for Instructional Development in Higher Education"

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ABSTRACT OF PRESENTATION:

Approximately thirty instructional development projects in process at a range of institutions of higher education in the Philadelphia region were identified and analyzed in this study. Projects were examined in relation to political and administrative control factors such as the nature of funding; subject matter content and scope; project management in relation to developers, faculty and administrators; training of project directors; support staff; implementation policies; and both implementation and diffusion strategies used to set up and promote the final program. Preliminary data from this regional survey is not encouraging to the professional instructional developer. Innovative and aggressive teaching faculty from the subject area disciplines, or high level academic officers seem to play a larger role and have a more significant impact upon the development of new programs than formally trained developers. Data also indicates that although faculty were sometimes given rewards of either money or release time, personal committment to projects appeared to be more important in ensuring success. Promotion consideration, however, was no realistic incentive for most, and in several cases faculty were discouraged from participation in projects in favor of publication.

Current implementation and diffusion theory seem to be corroborated by this survey. The larger the institution of the individual project, the more opportunity there is for internal communication problems. Thus, both smaller centrally administered institutions and more narrowly focused development projects seem to have a greater chance for success than large complex bureaucratic institutions and extended interdisciplinary projects. Thus, this study graphically demonstrates that ID as a systematic approach to solving educational program problems is dependent upon the efficiency of the communication and management systems within a given institution. Without interrelation of communication, management, and instructional decision-making systems, projects may anticipate confusion, delays, frustration, and eventual failure.

Politics and diffusion strategies of instructional development in higher education

Instructional development, a systematic process to analyze and develop procedures for the delivery of more effective instruction, has been widely accepted within the educational profession for many years. A single universal or operational definition of the ID process is not an easy, or perhaps even a desirable goal. There is general agreement within our profession; however, that ID involves a systematic approach to a given instructional problem (Baker & Schutz, 1971; Davies, 1971; Davis, Alexander & Yelon, 1974; Gerlach & Ely 1971; Popham & Baker, 1970 etc). Components of the process include the analysis of learner variables, the specification of content and performance objectives, the design and development of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and resources, the allocation of space and time within an instructional context, the evaluation of entry and exit learner skills and values, and the evaluation of the process itself in terms of both its effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the overall goals.

Implementation of instructional development within an institution of higher education has never been an easy task. It requires considerable time, energy and committment. Any project that hopes to achieve significant results requires extensive planning, controlled implementation, and continued evaluation over time. The text book ID approach prescribes important decision-making tasks as well as time-consuming production requirements throughout the projects. The process must also take place within an institutional context, and thus, must interface with yet another system which has its own range of controls, variables, and priorities. Approvals and arrangements are often required from faculty through policy or curriculum committees, or from administrators concerned with funds, resources, time or space. Ironically in many institutions of higher education, it is not uncommon to find.

that the priorities and procedures of the academic community and the administrative structure are in competition, or in conflict with those individuals who are seriously concerned with improving the quality of instruction. It is not uncommon for an ID team to spend many months developing and introducing a project such as construction of learning modules based on the principle of student mastery performance. After testing with students the team discovers significant increases, not only in achievement, but also in student motivation. Rather then being hailed for their improvement in instruction, the innovators then are bombarded with criticism from angry administrators and colleagues who are afraid of the uninformed public outcry against "grade inflation".

It has become increasingly evident in recent years that the successful instructional developer must also become a change agent within the institution. To do so it is necessary to identify and utilize the institution's political power structure in order to promote policies that lead to meaningful improvement in instructional programs. The research of other social scientists interested in the study of change, innovation or diffusion of new ideas can be helpful to the ID professional. Change in itself has become a discipline with its own systems and theories. Recent reviews of change literature by Chin and Downey (1973), and Giacquinta (1973) provide evidence of the extensive research in this field. The ID community has used this new change theory to develop strategies and isolate factors that can aid in the diffusion of the development projects in higher education. A recent study by Lawrason (1976) identified eight such strategies out of the current literature, then collected data from respondents in higher education on their perception of the relative importance of each. Factors or strategies included institutional administrative committment, faculty rewards, skills of the ID staff, evaluation of ID projects, faculty openness to change, student attitudes, and the focus of the ID Center program. No agreement, however,

seemed to be indicated among respondents on the relative importance of factors. Responses from ID students, ID professionals, faculty and administrators were not at all correlated with their academic status. Developers, for example, did not agree on whether factors related to administration, to faculty, or to their own personal skills were more significant in the implementation and diffusion of ID projects.

Although the study attempted to examine the relative importance of ID diffusion strategies, responses from subjects were based upon global opinion or overall experience rather than related to a specific ID project. Much of the current literature on diffusion deals with a theory of advice to perspective innovators or change agents. There are fewer studies where representative projects are analysed in relation to a specific administrative and political institutional context. The Rand Report, as reviewed by Berman&McLaughlin (1976), examines such specific federal projects for change in education. The multi-volumed Report looks at project outcomes in terms of perceived success, changes in behavior, fidelity or implementation and the institutional setting.

The purpose of the present study is not to review the diffusion strategy literature or "state of the art" theory. That task is being undertaken by my colleague, Dr. Durzo, in his presentation. This study has attempted to compare recent theory with the reported practice of many institution in reference to the development of instructional projects. In this study sample institutions were asked who promotes ID projects, who pays for them, how do they get done, and who implements them within their institution.

II. THE STUDY

The study surveyed sixteen representative institutions in the Delaware Valley region. The geographic region of southern Pennsylvania and eastern New Jersey represents an area of approximately eight million inhabitants with a geographic

center in Philadelphia. The region is comprised of high density inner city neighborhoods, a variety of surrounding suburban communities, as well as large rural areas.

Institutions included five two-year community colleges, five four-year private colleges, one four-year state college, three private universities and two state-related universities. Contacts were made with principle academic leaders who referred the investigator to projects in progress within the institution.

Data was then collected by the investigator primarily by telephone interview. In some cases on site interviews were conducted to gain additional information or insight into the nature of the projects. In pilot testing the data form (Appendix A), it was soon evident that answers to the simplest questions often were qualified by respondents, and additional information was necessary in order to put the response in a proper context. The vast differences in the level, scope, content and organization of the projects in the survey make data collection a most difficult task. Thus, it was decided that the phone interview procedure would be more efficient than mailing the forms to project directors. Moreover, given the normal attrition rate with such forms, the direct interview approach was also deemed to be more expedient.

Respondents were first read the following introductory statement with a definition of an instructional development project:

> I am currently making a survey of instructional development projects for a research paper that I am writing. The purpose of my paper is to provide useful information to other developers about the various ways ID projects are organized in terms of the administrative structures of the institution. I am defining an instructional development project as any project that involves the following stages of development:
>
> 1. a proposal stage to gain financial support (either internal or external).
> 2. a goals stage where student performance objectives were specified.
> 3. a design and production stage where instructional procedures

and materials were developed to help students reach the stated goals.

4. an evaluation stage where procedures and materials were tried out with representative students and measured for effectiveness.

Has your institution had any such projects under development over the last year?

If the respondent agreed that his or her project qualified as an ID project, the investigator proceeded with the questions devised on the data form.

III. RESULTS

A. Projects by Institution

Of the sixteen regional institutions surveyed the twenty-eight ID projects were dispersed according to table 1. The five community colleges accounted for eleven of the total, the five private four-year colleges had four, and the single state college had one. The two state-related universities had six projects represented in the survey, while the three private universities also had six reported.

B. Project Academic Subject Area

A full range of academic subject areas were represented in the twenty-eight projects surveyed. Education projects accounted for the greatest number with five projects. Interdisciplinary studies projects involving three or more subject areas (primarily Humanities and Social Science areas) had four projects in progress. Science, Mathematics,and Allied Health each had three; Faculty Development, Basic Skills, Engineering, and Social Work areas had two each. Career Education and English both had one project represented in the survey.

C. Project Size and Scope

The majority of projects (twenty) involved more than a single course. Several of these projects were at the level of a full career-oriented program to train professionals in required competencies. Only one project represented a single workshop session, and the remaining seven projects were at the level of a three credit unit course.

D. Project Funds

Funds for ID projects came from a variety of sources. Federal grants accounted for almost half the projects (thirteen), while state aid provided support for only one. The second largest investor was the institution itself. Seven projects were funded from the central administration: two by Colleges within institutions, and one by an academic department. The remaining four projects were funded by grants from private agencies.

E. Project Management

1. Rank of the Project Director:

Each project was asked to define the principle role of the project director (PD). Seventeen directors out of the twenty-eight were faculty within the academic discipline of the project. Three PDs were department chairpersons, four served at the level of an academic dean or vice president of the institution and four were ranked as staff positions. In these last cases the PDs were hired for the task of directing the project, while in the other 25, directors were already at the institution prior to the proposal.

2. Training and Experience of the Project Director:

Ten of the directors interviewed in the survey underwent formal training in the ID process. Another ten of the PDs had some exposure to the concept through training workshops, seminars or extended readings. Eight PDs, however, had no training at all for their task. This lack of training seemed to be somewhat offset by the experience of most PDs. Nineteen had worked on prior projects, while nine were freshmen to the development process. Of these nine, four had neither training nor previous experience.

3. The ID project Team

In almost all cases the development team involved a number of institutional representatives. Only one project relied wholly upon the director for

program input. Another was completed by two people, the director and a top administrator. Fifteen projects were a cooperative effort between the PD and a group of faculty from the academic subject area. Another nine projects involved not only faculty but also a range of specialists including curriculum and evaluation experts.

4. The Project Staff:

While twenty-five of the projects gained clerical assistance, only a few teams had the services of a full-time secretary. In almost all cases such aid was recruited from existing departmental or institutional pools. Similarly of the nineteen projects that had media specialist assistance, all used regular campus services rather than a full time staff. Ten of the projects had the aid of instructional development consultants. In most instances this was provided through the director, or a senior academic adviser with advanced training. Only in two instances were professional external consultants approached.

Table 1. Projects by institutions

Institutional level	Number of institutions	Number of projects
Community College	5	11
Private Four-year	5	4
State Four-year	1	1
State-related University	2	6
Private Universities	3	6
	16	28

Table 2. Project Academic Area

Academic Area	Number of projects
Education	5
Interdisciplinary Studies	4
Science	3
Mathematics	3
Allied Health	3
Faculty Development	2
Basic Skills	2
Engineering	2
Social Work	2
Career Education	1
English	1
	28

Table 3. Project Size and Scope

Size	Number of Projects
larger than one course	20
one course	7
workshop	1
	28

Table 4. Project Funds

Fund Source	Number of Projects
federal	13
state	1
institution	7
college within institution	2
department	1
agency	4
	28

Table 5. Project Director Rank

Rank	Number of Project Directors
faculty	17
chairperson	3
administrator	4
staff	4
	28

Table 6. Project Director Training

Training	Number of Project Directors
formal	10
informal	10
none	8
	28

Table 7. Project Director Experience

Experience	Number of Project Directors
prior experience	19
no prior experince	9
	28

F. Implementation/Diffusion Policies

Project Directors were questioned on thirteen implementation/diffusion strategies. Since evaluation of the relative success of each project in achieving its goals was not the intention of the study, there is no attemtpt to correlate these implementation policies with either qualitative or quantitative resuits. Thus, the survey only reflects the frequency of use of each strategy as reported from the twenty-eight projects.

Table 8. Project Implementation/Diffusion Strategies

Implementation/Diffusion Strategy	Frequency of Use in Projects
1. faculty planning input	17
2. faculty planning rewards:	
a. money	9
b. promotion	4
c. release time	5
3. faculty implementation rewards:	
a. money	9
b. promotion	3
c. release time	4
4. faculty orientation program	19
5. faculty in service	13
6. use of validation data	9
7. teacher self evaluation procedures	11
8. publicity for ID project	9
9. continued monetary support	16
10. external evaluation	12
11. student opinion data	20
12. other unsolicited strategies:	
a. support of administration	13
b. sale of instructional development product	3

IV. DISCUSSION

It is perhaps misleading to attempt to draw conclusions from the data on whether the level or size of the institution was related to the number of ID projects identified. The survey did not attempt to be all inclusive of the total number of projects at each institution, nor were all institutions in the region canvaased. It was only apparent that some institutions seemed to have more projects in progress than others. One of the private state colleges, for example, had three of the total of four projects indentified for that group. Different philosophies and priorities of the inscitution, would perhaps account for these differences rather than their size alone. The one most productive College had an administrator who was a positive change agent and reached out into the community as well as promoted ID activity with his own faculty. The other colleges, while espousing improvement of instruction, had not been totally successful in moving faculty out of the traditional limited lecturer/scholar role.

The most ambitious projects in terms of both scope and subject area shared one common factor: all were innovative either in terms of curricular content or instructional technique. For example, several colleges developed new curriculum in Allied Health, Career Education, or the new field of Gerontology as a response to community needs and interests. These projects had the highest potential for success for a number of reasons. First, as a response to both community and federal priorities, the projects had selected target areas which were in line for government funding. Secondly, since the projects were a direct response to a local community need, student populations were assured for the new programs. By selecting new subject fields not formerly taught at the institutions, two project teams overcame one additional obstacle that hampered other projects. These two teams had a clean slate to

develop new instructional strategies and policies which would then be set up in a new College Department rather than in a pre-existing Department with all its political and administrative priorities. As noted in later discussion, ID success often appears correlated inversely with the number of administrative committees and levels of control that projects must pass before approval.

The Career Education project and several other major projects involved experimentation with inter-disciplinary teaching approaches, or with new learning concepts such as experiential learning, personalized learning, or individulized instruction. All such projects depend on voluntary contribution by existing faculty. While the potential for change is high, the political realities in sustaining complicated arrangements for assuring continued administrative and faculty support make the full incorporation of such projects less secure.

The role of the ID project director would seem to be a critical one in the development of new instructional procedures and resources. Yet, neither the academic rank nor training of the PD seemed to be correlated with project approval. The lack of any formal training for the majority of PDs is distressing, particularly to the professional instructional developer. While more than 50% of the PDs had undergone at least informal ID tranining, the majority were from the academic subject area of the project and lacked the more widely-based educational expertise associated with the professional developer. It is perhaps even more significant to note that only five of the fifteen institutions surveyed has such professional assistance available. In at least three of those institutions which had ID support there has been turnover in these positions of conflicts between the ID professional and the administration. Only on of all fifteen institutions maintains a Center for Instructional Development as a separate office within the administrative structure.

Inplementation and diffusion strategies were primarily the traditional

ones used in most institutions, and corroborated current theory. The most successful and commonly used was the necessary task of gaining input from faculty on the project content. The means of achieving input varied greatly from forming small committees to gathering data from large numbers of interested faculty. In other projects where new subject disciplines were being introduced the same strategy was less useful. One project this gathered valuable input from external subject area professionals, as well as from interested community leaders.

Orientation of faculty before the implementation of the project was a common strategy in many projects, but less than half the projects followed up with continued faculty support throughout the first year. Only one third of the projects attempted to convince faculty of the validity of the new procedures by demonstrating successful results from either pilot test data or other successful programs.

Project evaluation was not used widely as either an implementation or a diffusion strategy. While twenty projects did use student feedback, much of this was an institutional requirement not related to the actual project. Only one third used instructor self evaluation to give feedback throughout the project implementation; and only one third built in an external evaluation to measure the success of the procedures, and to gain support for the project.

Although directors were not asked specifically about administrative support for their projects, thirteen PDs voluntarily stated that such support was essential. The visibility of their support can be interpreted through several other reported factors. The first indicator comes from the project's source of funds. Only ten of the twenty-eight were funded by the institution itself. In terms of tight budgets this may not be a true test of administrative support; it may be, however, an indication of the low level of priority that such projects

have in relation to other expenses made on campuses. Only those projects that proved cost efficient or generated more student population were assured of continuation of support by the institution after external funds were expended.

A more critical area by which to evaluate administrative support for innovative ID projects is that of faculty rewards for participation in such work. Data indicates that concrete support for faculty was given in less than half of the ID projects surveyed. Rewards for both planning and implementation stages came in the form of money or release time to work on projects. Only four project directors, however, could report with any certainty that they might receive consideration for promotion based on the time and effort spent on the project. Several PDs indicated that their work had seriously impaired their chances for promotion, and that their administration had encouraged them to stay away from development tasks in favor of further research. One such director admitted that he had been discouraged from such activity, despite the fact that he had been awarded the Distinguished Teacher Award by the institution's student body based on his innovative project. Such conflict between traditional priorities of research, service, and teaching is by no means uncommon within other institutions. Changes in the promotion policies to consider all three areas with equal weight appear to be slow in coming. While administrators often actively promote the concept of better teaching, those groups who are in control of promotion standards seem uninformed of any shift in priorities toward better instruction.

It is perhaps significant to note that a large percentage of the projects came from the community colleges where the committment is more for providing instruction to a wide variety of learners than for individual faculty research. Two other four year colleges accounted for another sizable number of projects.

In all these institutions instruction seemed to be rated as equal in priority to faculty research. In one large university where such a priority does not exist, an enlightened administration got around the recognized "second class status" of instructional development activity by employing only tenured professors to develop the large scale interdisciplinary program.

Part of the difficulty in giving administrative support to ID relates to the role of the administrator in relation to the faculty in general. Many faculty perceive administrators as the adversary and fight to maintain as much control as possible over academic decision-making. An administration who appears too supportive of ID could be seen by a insecure faculty member as a threat to his or her own academic freedom and integrity. Confrontation over management of instructional questions if not uncommon, particularly in older more academically oriented institutions where the individual freedom of the faculty member is sacrosanct. Several major projects that involved several different subject disciplines and subsequent administrative approvals failed because of either bitter polarization or total lack of communication between faculty and admininstrators on instructional goals.

One such major project charged that the administration had failed to take leadership in fear o arousing conflict, and this, all central efforts for instructional improvement failed. The paradox here is that while administrators encourage improvement and even better "productivity" among faculty, they tend to absolve their power to allocate major resources and rewards in favor of voluntary efforts at improvement by individual faculty members. While voluntary innovative projects are to be commended, such efforts are unlikely to make major changes in the overall instructional practices on the campus. One director in a final plea to his administration for support stated that it alone "holds in its hands the symbols and prerogatives of legitimate

authority. If it chooses to use that authority to improve instruction, change is possible...without that authority, the boundaries of voluntary innovation will prove impossible.."

The same director was also critical of both faculty and administration for failing to recognize the intellectual depth of the instructional process. Gaps in knowledge, he claimed, was evident in areas of group dynamics, organization theory, experimental design, measurement, epistomology, statistics, instructional design, developmental and educational psychology, and details of particular technologies. To state that the missing knowledge is merely in the area of education, a field of little status and use, he charged, was an anti-intellectual defense.

A second institution is currently encountering a similar polarization and resistance to a major campus wide improvement grant. In the first institution the grant was finally terminated when it was evident that the administration could and would not support the recommendations of the project directors. In the second, the administration has used its power through the grant as a political tool against an already embittered faculty. Developers caught in a power struggle have had little opportunity to effect major change on a campus wide basis. In both cases the projects have been rendered ineffective by the lack of communication on how to achieve common goals that both sides espouse.

It would appear at first glance, that the size of the institution may have some effect upon the opportunity to achieve better communication. The larger the institution the more difficult successful communication becomes. In addition to size and communication systems, there are also the factors of the efficiency and the priorities of the institutions organization and management systems. Many successful projects surveyed were found in smaller institutions with supportive administrators who shared common goals with faculty. The small voluntary course-sized project, moreover, had a greater chance for survival,

than those involving several faculty departments and more extensive program or budgetary needs. Such interdisciplinary projects were only successful with strong administrative initiative or backing. If however, a number of different levels of administrative and faculty support or approval are necessary, the chances for success are reduced. As soon as major decision-making is involved between potential rival groups, the opportunity for real change becomes dependent upon complex systems of internal communication and management. Too often these systems may be at cross purposes with a system for instructional improvement.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The overall low level of instructional development activity in the Delaware Valley/Philadelphia region was somewhat disheartening. The initial task of identifying qualifying ID projects was itself a difficult one. The fact that only one institution in the region, including those outside the survey, has an office and staff for instructional development, underscores the lack of serious concern for the improvement of instruction at the institutional level. This observation, however, should not be interpreted as a reflection of the success or failure of projects reviewed in this survey, or those committed faculty working on them. To the contrary, the survey illustrates that certain concerned faculty, dedicated to the improvement of instruction will spend much energy and time on tasks which ultimately may not receive support by their peers or by even their administration. In fact, they persevere even though these ID tasks may damage their chances for promotion and their careers.

The single most apparent "diffusion strategy" observed through the series of interviews with project directors, therefore, was not one present on the data sheet. It is a factor that is most difficult to measure quantitatively or even objectively. The power of a committed individual, to do battle for change should never be underestimated. Lack of ID training, lack of experience, failure to evaluate all aspects of the project and even ignorance of all political and administrative hurdles can often be overcome by such committment to a project goal. The confidence and determination of knowledgeable professional academics, stood out as an effective means of achieving legitimate improvement in instructional practices.

While such committment is essential, strong independent personalities alone cannot bring about the full range of improvement required by most large or small institutions. Often when cast in the role of a rebel, such individuals become isolated or defensive about their own individual projects. For too long institutions of higher education have stressed the independence or individual academic roles. If instruction is to be significantly improved across the spectrum of college level education, then expertise is needed from many areas. Our institutions train graduates in interpersonal communication, in organization, in administration, in learning and instruction. It is time that these skills were used within the structures of the university community to effect the improvement of its own internal systems. Instructional development systems cannot be totally successful without parallel study and development of the institution's communication and management systems.

It is apparent from this survey that the role of the professional instructional developer is one of support for the academic project director rather than one of leadership. To ascribe too much power to a change agent appears to threaten both faculty and administration. To illustrate this support facilitative role, one can note the change of strategy that our foreign service change agents have taken in the last few years. Programs like Action no longer march confidently in to under-developed couuntries complete with all the answers. While these agents are prepared with the latest medical or agricultural technologies they do not any longer presume to go about setting up the programs paternalistically for the native populations. The new approach is to begin to interact at a more personal level with people in the target areas to begin to define problems and to discover workable solutions. Both sides contribute not only to "the project", but to sharing and interpersonal growth on both sides. This more humane and ultimately more successful approach allows the partners to exchange new ideas and technologies, in the implementation of new programs. As programs begin to be implemented with advice from the change agents, their role begins to diminish as the learners acquire the skills to incorporate the innovation into their own daily routines. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971, p 235) document this shift in the role of the change agent based on innovation research they have reviewed. Professional instructional developers have much to offer regular academic faculty, but their ability to utilize interpersonal communication skills as well as social and political organizational skills are just as valuable as their abilities with instructional systems.

Perhaps the single most valuable tool the ID professional can bring to the faculty member is the technique of program documentation. Without documentation of the ID process from its initial planning through evaluation and revision of the system, the faculty developer cannot hope to remove the stigma of second class status in the academic community. The technology involved in the ID

process (when done according to its step by step procedures with learner and content analysis, specification of learner performance goals, development of evaluative measures, design of instructional strategies and resources, testing of procedures, learner and program evaluation) is a rigorous exercise that can be documented at every phase. Such data can provide faculty with specific evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs to both their admininstrators and to their peers. Such information provides the basis of a growing body of research into learning strategies. Published or unpublished the amount of effort in writing proposals, development tasks, and evaluation documentation is as measureable as traditional research efforts by other faculty. Such documentation of ID projects thus can be used as evidence of scholarship in consideration of a faculty member's promotion.

In summary, the diffusion of instructional development technologies for improving instruction require the skills of committed change agents with proficiences in instructional systems, in interpersonal communication systems, and in organizational systems. Such change agents can assist faculty not just in building their own skills in instructional improvement, but also documenting their work in order to receive the appropriate recognition that they deserve from the academic community.

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